

## NSW SPANNER CRAB HARVEST STRATEGY WORKING GROUP

### Chair's Summary - 1<sup>st</sup> Meeting - 1 October 2021

The first meeting of the Spanner Crab Harvest Strategy Working Group (HSWG) took place online on Friday 1 October, with all members present and with assistance from NSW Fisheries staff.

I opened the meeting by welcoming members and thanking them for their participation. We talked through the Terms of Reference for the group and recognised that it is a subcommittee of the Commercial Fishing NSW Advisory Council (Commfish NSW).

The group discussed the purpose, scope and timeline for developing a Spanner Crab harvest strategy. Although the group has been established for a two-year period, the group felt it is better to work back from when we hope the harvest strategy will be used for setting Total Allowable Catch (TAC). We will plan to have a finished product available in early 2023, so it can be used to set TAC for the 2023/4 fishing period. In practise, the last 6 months would be taken up by review and approvals, so we will focus on building the harvest strategy over the next 6-8 months.

The meeting received a number of presentations from DPI Fisheries staff outlining the purpose and proposed structure of the harvest strategy, consistent with the NSW Fisheries Harvest Strategy Policy & Guidelines and with the first two NSW harvest strategies already drafted (Trawl Whiting and Lobster). The presentations emphasised that harvest strategies are dependent on both scientific and stakeholder input. It is important to reflect in a harvest strategy the conditions that stakeholders want to see, and the situations they want to avoid. The group will focus on these aspects in its early discussions and determine how they can be specified in a technical sense in the harvest strategy.

The group also discussed how harvest strategies can support co-management, providing a mechanism for shared responsibility in management decisions. The group acknowledged that it has access to a wide range of expertise in biology, ecology, economics and management, from DPI and from the independent scientist and economist on the group. Industry participation is vital to “ground truth” the various technical aspects and policy considerations during harvest strategy development. The harvest strategy should ultimately improve transparency in how decisions are made and provide certainty in looking ahead to future TAC determinations.

The group acknowledged that Spanner Crab is a stock shared with Queensland, who have their own harvest strategy. The group has a permanent observer from Queensland, in recognition of the shared responsibility for managing the Spanner Crab stock. The group is keen to learn from Queensland's experience and, while I expect that NSW and Queensland harvest strategies will be compatible, the NSW strategy needs to make sense for managing the NSW component of the stock and focus on long-term benefits to the NSW community.

The next meeting has been set for 29 October, also online. COVID-permitting, I am hopeful that the following meeting may be held in person in Ballina, so that all members can get to know each other better and continue to work together to design the key elements of the harvest strategy. In any case, I look forward to a continuation of the collaborative approach being taken by all members toward development of a harvest strategy for the Spanner Crab Fishery.

James Findlay, Chair, NSW Spanner Crab HSWG.